

SECTION 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.01 STUDY NEEDS AND GOALS

The South Reliever concept was proposed through public comment during the West Beltline and South Verona Road Improvement Studies. The improvement needs identified for these corridors include increasing US 151 system continuity, increasing regional mobility along US 12/18, and increasing safety along the US 151 and US 12/14 corridors. There are also secondary needs which need to be considered that include increasing neighborhood connectivity and opportunities for people to cross the Beltline and Verona Road corridors.

5.02 SOUTH RELIEVER ANALYSIS

After analysis of the South Reliever concept, it is clear that it does not address all the needs that were identified for the US 18/151 and US 12/14 corridors. The South Reliever would address the need to increase the US 151 system continuity. The South Reliever would fill in the only gap in the US 151 Backbone route from Fond du Lac to Dubuque by providing a direct freeway link from Verona to I-39/90 and rerouting US 151 traffic from Verona Road.

While the South Reliever will draw future traffic from the existing US 18/151 and US 12/14 corridors, future traffic volumes on both Verona Road and the Beltline will still rise above current levels. The increased levels of congestion and the continued presence of safety problems along Verona Road and the Beltline would still require improvements to those facilities. The South Reliever will also not sufficiently address regional, metropolitan, or local mobility in the existing US 151 corridor at levels that offset anticipated population and traffic growth in the Madison metropolitan area. The South Reliever alternative also does not enhance bicycle or pedestrian facilities in the US 151 and US 12/14 corridors.

5.03 CONCLUSIONS

This review's primary conclusion is that a South Reliever will not solve the existing and growing Verona Road safety and congestion problems. Therefore a South Reliever would not address the Verona Road project Purpose and Need. For this reason, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation dismissed this as a viable alternative to improve Verona Road on December 3, 2002. Specific details supporting this conclusion include:

- A South Reliever does not provide significant traffic volume relief to the Verona Road corridor or the Verona Road interchange.
- A South Reliever does not provide substantial traffic volume relief to the Beltline corridor.
- A South Reliever is not likely to reduce congestion-related crashes, improving safety, because it does not substantially reduce traffic volumes on the Verona Road corridor.
- A South Reliever does not address other stated project goals, including improving neighborhood connectivity.

- A South Reliever would create a physical barrier separating parts of Fitchburg and the Town of Dunn.
- A South Reliever would adversely affect farmland, uplands, and other natural resources within the Upper Sugar River, Yahara River, and Koshkonong Creek watersheds.
- The South Reliever concept was met with strong public opposition.
- The total cost of the South Reliever, Stages 1 through 3, is in the range of the cost of the two Verona Road improvement alternatives being considered.

A second conclusion is that a South Reliever would improve the overall roadway network in the Madison Metro Area, but would require a separate and more extensive study to determine whether those improvements are sufficient to offset the relatively high socio-economic, environmental, and fiscal impacts of such a project. Factors influencing this conclusion include:

- A Stage 1 or Stages 1-3 South Reliever would provide an alternative route for regional US 18/151 traffic and some commuters currently using Verona Road and the Madison Beltline.
- A large number of east-west travelers currently using other nearby existing local routes south of the Madison area would be drawn to a South Reliever.
- Of the two South Reliever alternatives studied, building Stages 1 through 3 has greater traffic flow benefits.
- Of the two South Reliever alternatives studied, Stage 1 with Park Street interchange improvements would require less land area and have fewer impacts on the natural environment.

If reevaluation of the concept is considered, further study will be needed to refine the cost and impacts associated with the South Reliever and Park Street interchange improvements.